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THE MOTHER GODDESS IN KAFIRISTAN /

The Place of the Mother Goddess  
in the Religious Dualism  
of the Kafir Aryans, Afghanistan

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
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in

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by  
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Beware!!!

### The Mother Goddess

Procuring information about the Mother Goddess is tabued, and particularly entering her temple and looking at her idol is forbidden vigorously. The violator has to sacrifice seven goats and wheat flour to the supreme god and to the goddess, and still be a social outcast. If the atonement is not met, socioeconomic calamity will befall on the community and the violator will suffer blindness, and even death, so believe the Kafirs. You only have to risk, she is illustrated here.

Get the goats!

## ABSTRACT

The culture of the Kafir Aryans of Afghanistan is characterized by a pervasive dualism. This dualism organizes the activities of men and women into two distinctive, but complementary spheres. These spheres are spatially separated into male activities located higher up the mountain sides, and female activities located lower down. The spheres are also divided into sacred (male, up) and profane, polluting (female, down) segments. These divisions are particularly noticeable in the religion of the Kafirs. The prominent gods are concerned with pastoralism, warfare, and other activities of the Kafir males, but the prominent goddesses are associated with agriculture, childcare, and other activities of the Kafir females. Where the male and female spheres of interest overlap, there the related deity has adopted a dualistic nature. In other words, an epithet of that particular deity is developed in connection with complementary functions. In this respect the image of the mother goddess is described with the related roles and symbols. The females have elaborated on that aspect of the mother goddess which pertains to their interest, and also the males on that of their own concern. The goddess's idol of that aspect, related to Kafir males, is sacred and

placed above the village level, and the idol of its epithet that is related to Kafir females is profane and placed below the village level. To each of them the approach of the opposite sex is strictly tabu, the breach of which brings about dire consequences.

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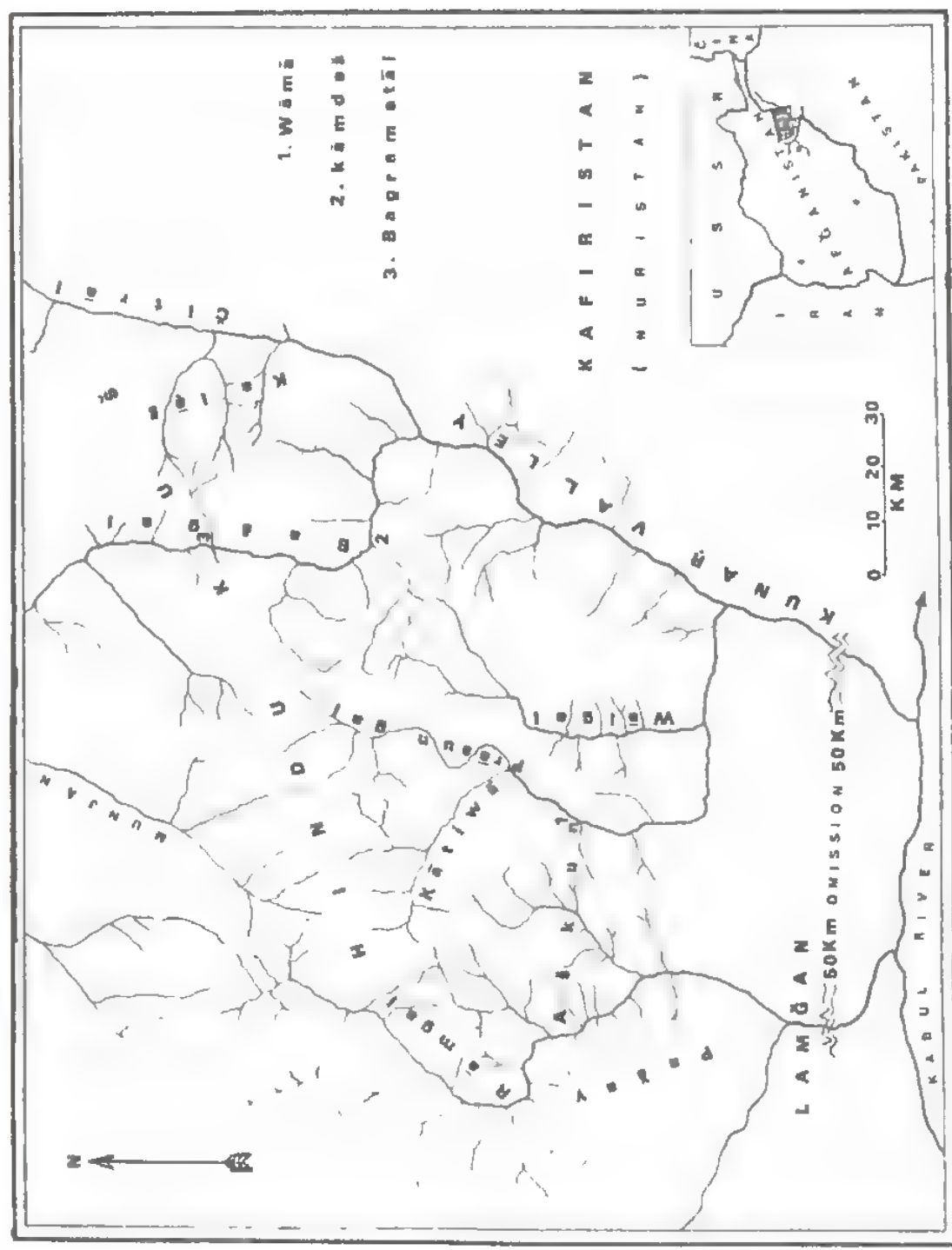
1. A dot below a phoneme indicates retroflexion as in Desañi.
2. The mark over a phoneme substitutes for /h/ as in Unjiṣ̌tawa (Un-jish-tawa).
3. The bar over a vowel phoneme indicates its elongation as in Utā.

## CHAPTER I

### THE KAFIR SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The upper extremities of two major valleys and provinces, Kunar and Laghman, are populated by a distinct ethnic group called the Kafir Aryans. Their country, Kafiristan, is situated on the southern slopes of the Hindu-Kush range of mountains in mideastern Afghanistan. The Kafir society is comprised of several tribes. They are the Kati of Ramgal (gal:valley) and upper Bashgal; the Kam of lower Bashgal; the Veron of Prasungal; the Wai of Waigal, who claim to be Kalash of Kalshum; the Kalash, who claim to be Kashkar, of Rumbur, Birir, and Brumburet; the Ashkum of Bajaygal and Majaygal; and the Pashay of Kunar, Alishang, and Alingar. On the basis of their customs and costume, all these tribes are divided into only two groups by their neighbors. The Kati and Kam tribesmen who wear black garments or black goatskins are called Black Kafirs, and the rest whose men wear white garments or white goatskins are known as White Kafirs (Robertson 1896:508-10; Dupree 1971:6). The goatskins are generally worn for work, or by poor people.

The Kafirs' society has survived an unknown number of invasions carried out by neighboring tribes, chiefdoms,



kingdoms, and even great empires. A few to be mentioned here are of Mahmud of Ghazni, Tamerlane, and Jahangir. The last and decisive invasion was that of Amir Abd al-Rahman Khan, who conquered the country and converted the people to Islam in the winter of 1895 (see Jones 1969). Kafiristan, "the land of infidels," was renamed Nuristan, "the land of (Islamic) light." Nevertheless, the Kalash Kafirs of three small side-valleys, the Rumbur, Brumburet, and Birir, of the Chitral were preserved. The Kalash Kafirs still have their former culture and practice their ancestral religion. Because of these people, I will be using the ethnographic present tense throughout this work, unless otherwise required.

As a result of the monsoon rains in summer and snow in winter the region of Kafiristan is forested with several species of trees and bushes. Fruit trees, medicinal herbs, and other plants grow wild in the area. Snow leopards, bears, monkeys, and varieties of game roam in the forested mountains. The natural environment is ideally suitable for raising livestock and promoting agriculture.

The Kafirs' economy is strictly and exclusively based on the sexual division of labor. The dominant aspect of their livelihood is pastoralism, which is the concern of males. The most important animals are goats and cows, respectively. A few sheep are also kept probably for their wool. The milk and the meat of sheep are tabued and despised by the males. A few horses are kept, but they are associated



raised in the mountain pastures. Milking, churning, cheese preparation, butter purification, and similar other works are exclusively done by the male members of the community. These dairy products are collected and then brought down to the village every 20th day in the warm season of the year. Through the economic role, men are associated with the mountains.

Agriculture is the concern of the female members of the society. The women break the soil, seed the crops, irrigate and weed the fields, harvest the crops, thresh and winnow the grain, and grind it in the village water mill. As the fields are situated at the bed of the valleys, this section of the area is thus considered to be the domain of the females. So each sex is polarized in relation to economic resources and their geographic distributions. That is, the males are identified with the upper part of the mountains, and the females with the lower part or the bed of the valleys.

A third economic group is the craftsmen. One portion of these include the wood workers who build houses, make agricultural implements, and prepare household utensils, such as pots, bowls, spoons, stools, tables, etc. Other craftsmen include the potter, the weaver, the ironsmith, and the stone worker. One single family may work at two or three crafts. This makes the number of craftsmen small in a single village. Although their function is quite important, their status is greatly inferior. In fact, they are

slaves and form the lowest caste of the society.

The villages are situated above the bed of the valleys and below the mountain forests. In other words, the villages have intermediary position between the domain of the males and that of the females. It is the point of departure and also the place of meeting for the two sexes. The Kafir villages are generally occupied by two exogamous clans. Each clan occupies one section of the village and divides it vertically. As the village is built on a mountain slope, there is a high-low relationship in the distribution of the houses. The houses for chiefs, other high status men, and religious figures are situated at the highest part of the village, and those of the slave craftsmen at the lowest. In between the two strata live the free commoners. Contact and even entrance to one another's household, especially on certain occasions, is strictly tabued between the upper and lower caste members.

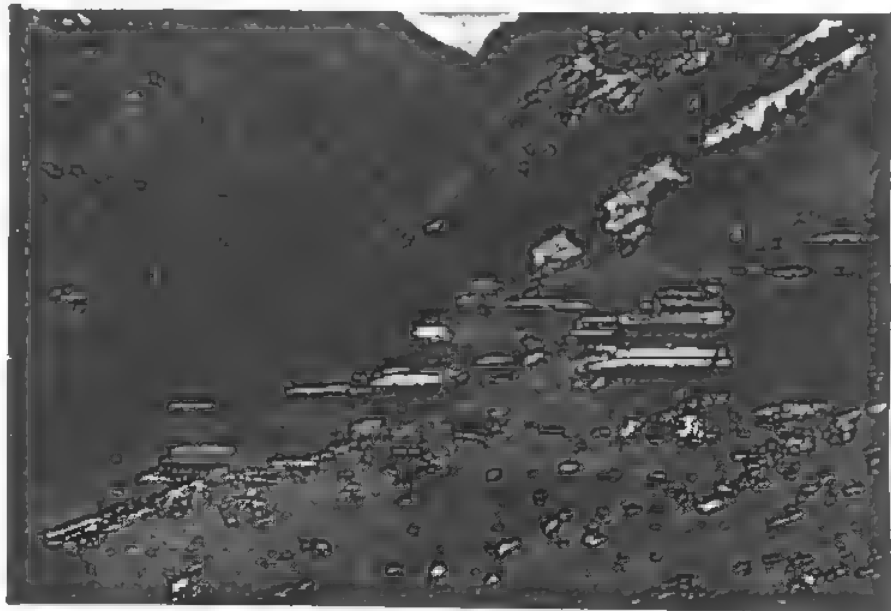
This pattern of three domains, or a dual system with an intermediary sphere, is also represented in the order and structure of the Kafir house, particularly among the upper-class Black Kafirs. A ranked man's house is generally comprised of three rooms. The upper room is exclusively for the ranked men and their guests of high status. The lower room is a storeroom in which field and dairy products are kept and is associated with women. The middle room is the intermediary or living room in which males and females relate to each other. Even within this room the concept of

the three domains is observed. For instance, a craftsman, a member of the lower caste, may cross the threshold, but he must stay between the door and central hearth of the family room. He is not allowed to move forward or to the sides. A woman, even though a family member and who may run the house, cannot move around freely within her own abode. She must stay out of the sacred space which lies between the central hearth and the back wall of the room. This is the males' space and above it on the wall is located the symbol for the family tutelary deity.

The Kafirs have a number of socioreligious ranks which are achieved through generosity and warfare. For this reason the members of the upper-class compete among themselves in order to control more economic resources and to accumulate more wealth. The wealth is then invested in the acquisition of high status by making sacrifices of numerous goats, cattle, cheese, wine, grain, and, indirectly, of enemies to the deities. Men of highest status exercise political power. They form the "inner council" of the Kafirs. In addition, each village elects one representative to the "executive council" of the tribe or valley. Members of the latter have a one year term. The function of the two <sup>magistrates</sup> councils is to preserve and enforce custom and law in the society. They announce the exact date for a festival, for moving up or bringing down the flocks, for sowing and harvesting, etc. They also settle conflicts arising from theft, adultery, homicide, and other crimes. They punish the violators with fining or with humiliation.



1. The Kalash people in their native attire.



2. The Bruna Village with the temple to Dezalik in the foreground and the shrine to Mahandew in the background.

## CHAPTER II

### THE KAFIR SUPERNATURALISM

#### The Cult of the Deities

The dieties of the Kafirs are, of course, part of the sacred web of the Kafir culture. Being sacred they are associated with mountains, goats, and the male sex. However, these gods and goddesses have similar complementary and supplementary socioeconomic functions as do the male and female members of Kafir society.

The Kafirs' pantheon embodies a number of deities, giants, and spirits. Several deities are common to most valleys, but others are peculiar to a single valley. Deities with similar names have different roles in the valleys of different tribes, and also deities with various names have similar roles in the areas. Below I will briefly describe some of the important deities of the Kafirs, but I will not describe all of them, because there are more than ten for each of the tribes and more than thrity for the society at large.

Imra is the supreme god for the Black Kafirs and created some of the other gods, human beings, and everything else. He is mainly worshipped as the originator and guardian of pastoral life. He is the master of the goat herds. Imra contributed the goats to man and taught him how to



milk, churn, and make corrals for them.

Indr (the well known Vedic god) is the supreme being among the White Kafirs, excepting the Veron and Kalash. Indr is famous in making wine. He is libated with this drink when it is fermented. Indr is also the god of thunder, lightning, and earthquakes.

Giş is the war god of the Kafirs. As the Black Kafirs are more warlike than the White Kafirs, so their frequent sacrifices and enthusiastic worship of the god have overshadowed the status and worship of the supreme being, Imra. If there is an uneasiness in the society, the shaman declares that the war god is angry because of lack of attention. To appease Giş the warriors must attack a neighboring community and capture goats. The raiders divide and keep the female goats, but they sacrifice the males at the temple to the war god.

Mon is generally recognized as the prophet, secretary, or agent of Imra. Among the Kalash, Mon (Mahandew) is the supreme god and his role is similar to that of Imra. Mon is believed to be very wise. He hates demons and has been always at war with malicious spirits.

Desani is the fertility goddess for men, animals, and field crops. She is concerned with their perpetuation, safety, and protection.

Krumay (Ksumay, Jistak) is the tutelary goddess of

Separate  
w. Kalash

initiates  
w. upur

family, lineage, and clan. She is the center of social affairs.

. Nirmali (Dezalik) is the goddess of conception under whose care childbirth takes place. Only women attend the temple of this goddess.

The last three goddesses figure prominently in this study and will be dealt with in the following chapters, but for the other deities see Robertson (1896), Morgenstierne (1953), Siiger (1956), Snoy (1962), Edelberg (1968), Palwal (1969a), and Dupree (1971).

In general the gods and goddesses are represented by anthropomorphic wooden images, but some of the deities, especially those of demon origin, are associated with natural boulders or carved wooden symbols. However, spirits are exclusively represented through rocks and trees with which they are usually associated. These spirits are not of human origin but they do interact with humans.

#### The Cult of the Ancestors

The dead are extremely honored among the Kafirs. Upon a man's death he is dressed in his best attire. Female relatives sit on his bier and wail. Males of older age stand together and chant praises of the dead man and his ancestors. The rest of the people, who come from nearby valleys, dance around the bier with the drums played continuously day and night. Generally, the rite lasts from one to three days. During this time numerous goats are immolated to feed the participants. Bread and cheese are also served. On the

last day the corpse is placed in the coffin with toy bows, dry fruits, bread, and clarified butter.

With the occurrence of death, the house and the family members of the deceased are all considered impure. They are forbidden to enter sacred places, approach other persons, <sup>anti</sup> or participate in rites. They have this status of impurity <sup>impure</sup> for one year. On the anniversary of the dead a life size effigy is brought to the village dancing arena. Again all the people are invited and rites similar in nearly every detail to those of the funeral are performed. Instead of the corpse, the effigy is placed on a slave's back and danced ahead of the crowd. On the last day of the ceremony the effigy is erected among the other effigies at a place lower than the village. The bones of the dead are collected and put in a sack which is tied to the back of the effigy. By completing this the family is purified and returns to normal life (for details see Robertson 1896:351, 630; Palwal 1969c).

Individual families may give offerings to their dead at any time they wish, but the Kafirs have at least two major festivals in which they honor their dead. One is the early spring festival called Māṛvela, which means "raising of the dead". This will be described later. The other one is held in autumn which is called Atunawist, meaning the revival or "up-bringing of the dead". According to the informant from Bagramatal, the memories about the ancestors are faded through time and they are consequently forgotten.

Death

But in the major festival their genealogies, life-histories, and praises are chanted by the orators, and the memories of the people about their ancestors are refreshed anew.

The expensive ceremonial feasts, music, dancing, praising, genealogy recitation, the carving of elaborate effigies, perpetual association of the dead with the living are generally known as ancestor-worship. So assert the different field researchers, but their informants deny it altogether (Palwal 1969c:23). Elphinstone has pointed out that ancestors are "worshiped as much as any other gods," (1819, II:431). Robertson provides us with the following comprehensive account of the case:

There are distinct traces of ancestor-worship in Kafiristan, although it is strenuously denied by the people. The effigies erected to the memory of the dead are sometimes sacrificed to, and have their pedestals sprinkled over with blood by descendants suffering from sickness. Long fragments of stone are set on end in many places. These, no doubt, are partly intended as a kind of cenotoph, but a goat is always killed when they are erected. (1896:414).

The informants are right in rejecting the idea of ancestor-worship. The males do not approach either the coffin ground for the dead or their effigies. Those who carry out the rituals are the female members of the society. Even the place for the ancestral effigies is in the domain of the females. This gives it specific significance and is the topic of Chapter V.

#### The Religious Practitioners and Worship

The Kafirs have three categories of religious practitioners, each of which has one chief. One of the three

main functionaries is the high-priest, called Uta. He ~~per-~~ <sup>Ans</sup>forms the rituals, sacrifices, and offerings to the dieties. Another principal religious practitioner is the tribal orator, called Deblāl. He chants hymns of the deities and recites myths relevant to the occasion. This personage and other subordinate orators recount the life stories and genealogies of their great heroes. The third religious figure of the Kafirs is the shaman, called Pse. Upon seeing the blood of sacrificial animals, smelling the burning holy incense at the ceremonies, or approaching the temple of a deity, the shaman is possessed by the appropriate deity and falls in a trance. Robertson has called him the mad priest (1896:417). When he is not possessed, he can reveal the nature and remedy of several problems. Through divination with a special bow he discloses to the troubled person that one or the other deity is angry because its tabu has been breeched or its worship ignored. He then orders the sacrifice of a certain number of goats.

Generally one or several oxen are sacrificed to Imra, and male goats to other deities except Bagist and Nirmali to whom rams are sacrificed instead. Sacrifices of goats are also made to spirits and demons. The animals are immolated at the temples or shrines of the deities and feasted upon there, unless females participate in the affair. The blood of the animal is spilled on the idol or symbol for the deity and on the fire in which incense with clarified butter is also burned in the form of worship. Meanwhile prayers are



made to the god of whom they request almost the same ends as do other peoples -- good health, a prosperous year, success and good luck. The sacrifices are generally calendrical and are associated with critical occasions of pastoral and agricultural life.

In the festivals, which last from three to ten days, music is played and dances are performed. Hymns of gods and praises of ancestors are sung. Male and female members of the community appear in their special attire. The two sexes indulge in play, imitate each other and, on certain occasions of specific festivals, even ridicule one another with obscene language. In association with the festivals, males have contests such as racing, weight lifting, weight throwing, and pole jumping.

#### Summary

For the deities the main element of sacrifice is the shedding of blood among the Kafirs. The blood, incense and butter are burned and turned into smoke in order that they may reach the deities above. On the other hand, for ancestors the best food of the family table, such as cooked rice, wheat bread, butter, cheese, their combinations, and wine, are offered. Ancestral effigies are smeared with butter instead of the blood sprinkled over the idols. Also food for the ancestors is not destroyed by fire, but by water and travels to the dead below. The characteristic features of the rituals performed for the deities and ancestors are compared in the following table.

TABLE 1

	<u>Deity</u>	<u>Ancestor</u>
Representation	Idol	Effigy
Performer	Males	Females
Offering	Blood	Food
Consumer	Fire	Water
Space	Urdesb (Upper)	Yurdesb (Lower)

The Kafirs' religion and their socioeconomic bases interrelate as elements of a functioning whole. Though we often describe such religious and cultural elements apart and in isolation from one another, they are in fact interwoven as a network within the religion, on the one hand, and within the whole culture, on the other. Nonetheless, we can note that the major trait complexes of the religion are:

1) Belief in supernatural beings as deities, spirits, and ancestral souls.

2) Concrete presence or association of the supernatural beings with (in) idols, fetishes, effigies, temples, and certain marked places.

3) The ingredients of festivals and calendrical rites are chants, music, dancing, and/or reinacted drama.

4) The religious practitioners are shaman, ceremonial priest, and orator.

5) Communication to the supernaturals is achieved through prayers, oration, divination, and possession.

Temporally, the rituals are associated with physical and economic crises for man and his environment; the crises are generally calendrical.

Spatially, the Kafirs have a three world system as part of their belief. One is Urdesh, the upper world or the domain of the deities, goats, and men, and which is the upper part of the mountains; second is Michdesh, the middle world or the domain of the living males and females and which is the village; and third is Yurdesh, the lower world or the domain of the dead and the females and which is the lower section of the mountains or beds of the valleys (cf. Robertson 1896:380).

### CHAPTER III

#### THE MOTHER GODDESS

#### AND THE KAFIR SEXUAL DUALISM

In a society where a strict sexual division of economic activity prevails and where that division is enhanced by tabus and other implications of supernaturalism, the relevant cultural aspects of that society tend toward an extreme dualism. This duality might be spatial, i.e., one specific area might be peculiar to females and another to males; or the duality might be laboral, i.e., certain works might be done by women and tabued for men, or vice versa.

The sexual duality of male and female receives extreme considerations in the religious sphere of socioeconomic life. Not only are the activities of the sexes divided into two separate sets of behaviors, but the related objects and resources are also separated. Furthermore, dual personality, dual function, and dual appearance are also ascribed to those supernatural beings who are involved in the socioeconomic life of males and females of the society. When each sex concentrates on separate aspects of the same deity in accordance to its particular interest, the deity is consequently split into two. These two separate aspects of the same deity may develop independently into two distinct entities, two distinct gods or goddesses.

### The Fertility Aspect of the Goddess

As has already been mentioned, Desaṇi, the goddess of fertility, has four distinct functions in the perpetuation of human life. Two of the functions are economic and the other two are social and procreative. The two economic functions are divided between males and females. The procreative role of the goddess is also divided between the two sexes in regard to their wishes, expectations, needs, and roles. The social aspect of the goddess is common to both sexes and thus enhances and perpetuates social relations of the family, clan, and the community members at large.

The economic function of the goddess that is the concern of males is in relation to animal husbandry. The temple for Desaṇi is attended by men. Males make calendrical and occasional sacrifices to her for the intensification of their virility, health, safety, the increase in livestock and their dairy produce.

At the Kafir New Year festival, Giche, is entirely in honor of Desaṇi (Robertson 1896:410). A goat is sacrificed to the goddess and another to the supreme god, Imra. Images of goats are made of flour and also drawn on walls and then driven symbolically to the mountains to be reborn. It is aimed at the fertility of the goats under the auspices of Desaṇi who is associated with the upper parts of the mountains. At the same time the flocks of goats are also driven up from the valley bed to the Šāl, "corral", on the mountain

*'Goat Magic'*



side and from there they are taken to pastures up in the mountains in the beginning of the warm season. Arriving at the pasture a newly born goat kid is immolated in the form of a first fruit sacrifice to the goddess. When returning the flocks downward to the valley, each group sends one young goat of the same year down to the valley in order to be sacrificed in the fall and this seems to be connected more with the forthcoming harvest of field crops.

AT  
JOSH IN  
KUMBUR ?

Utchulik  
Wingak

When the flock is in the mountain pastures, its dairy produce (butter, cheese, and others) is brought to the village after each Kafiri month of twenty days. This is called Lao and there are six of them in the whole warm season for the Black Kafirs. When the first Lao is brought to the village, a feasting ceremony is held on the same day in honor or worship of Desani at the shrine for the goddess. This is called Desanilao which Robertson has recorded as Dizanedu in Kamdes, the headquarters of the Kam tribe. He provides us with the following information about the ceremony:

The Dizanedu occurred on July 9 (1n 1891). For two days previously, men and boys had been hurrying in from all sides bringing cheeses and ghee. Every pshal or dairy farm contributed. At two o'clock the male inhabitants of Kamdes went to Dizane's shrine to sacrifice a couple of goats, and make offerings of portions of cheese and bread-cakes. Then the whole company returned to Gish's temple..... (1896:590-91)

Like  
To Sajigor, Runka  
in August

The economic function of the goddess that relates to women is the care of field crops. In agriculture, the prosperity, good yield, and protection of fields is the concern

of Desaṇi (Robertson 1896:412; Edelberg 1968:11). As cultivation is the occupation of the Kafir women, they have to supplicate the goddess for her favor in order to receive better fruits for their efforts. On the other hand, although they are of her sex, the Black Kafir women do not have access to the temple of Desaṇi, because it is above the village level and in the domain of the males. In such a case the sacrificial rituals are carried out from a distance. In other words, the rite is performed not in association with the goddess to whom it is made, but in association with the fields for the sake of which the sacrifice is carried out. According to Robertson, spring sowing sacrifices are also made to the sister goddesses of Desaṇi as he writes:

7 Bruna?  
(Photo)

Imra also created seven daughters, whose special province it is to watch over the work of agriculture with a protective hand. As the time for sowing approaches, goats are sacrificed in their honour, in order that crops may be ample and the earth beneficent. (ibid.:382)

Next to the prominent role of Desaṇi in the field of agriculture is her sister, Kṣumay. The latter is recognized as the goddess of vineyards and grapes by the eastern Kati tribe (cf. Morgenstierne 1953:177), but she takes over almost the entire economic function of Desaṇi in the Brumburet Valley. The Kalash have a festival in honor of Kṣumay in the beginning of May. This is called the Čilamjuṣ festival or Joši (cf. Morgenstierne 1949; 1932:37), in which women take dry fruits to the vicinity of the shrine

for the goddess. After making its offering to the goddess they feast upon the rest. Dances and singing are also held in honor of Ksumay which have relevance to the fruitfulness of the newly sown crops. In another <sup>Summer</sup> ~~(spring)~~ festival, called U<sup>toziyok</sup> or U<sup>toziyok</sup>cal, a male goat is killed by the men to the goddess and the members and chief of the executive council are chosen to protect the new fields and their crops until they are ripe.

Little Joshi  
May. 21

when?  
Feb/May  
Little Joshi

Among the Islamized Askun people of western Kafiristan (Nuristan), the sacrifice of one or several goats is made in a single field where the chief lady of the village inaugurates sowing of their fields. In relation to this ceremony, Dupree provides us with the following information for the people of Wama:

A mullah cut off the head of a cow (instead of slitting its throat to make it halal or clean, as a Muslim would do) at the community meeting area and sprinkled a little blood with his knife blade in the direction of the fields. He symbolically buried several chunks of meat in a nearby field. (1971:18)

In the case of the western Kati people, the ceremony of spring sowing is syncretized with the Kafir New Year festival. This combined rite is carried out on the New Year day of the Muslim Afghan calendar, the 21st of march. On this day an ox is sacrificed to Imra.

### The Social Aspect of the Goddess

In spite of the strict exclusion of members of the opposite sex in participating in the pastoral and agricultural rituals, the Kafirs have communal ceremonies devoted

to the goddess in which males and females both can participate. These rites are generally concerned with the social guardian aspect of Desani which is generally recognized with two different names, Krumay (among the Black Kafirs and the Veron or Prasungalis) and Jiṣṭak (among the Kalash). As Desani, she is a tribal goddess for the Kam and Kati tribes as territorial communities, but clan goddess among the Veron (Edelberg 1968:11); as Krumay or Ksumay she is village goddess for the two groups of people; and as Jiṣṭak she is a village goddess among the Kalash in Rumbur, a clan goddess in Brumburet, and a family goddess in Birir.

According to my data from Bagramatal, Desani, Krumay, and Ksumay are three distinct goddesses, but according to the data from Ramgal the latter two are the same. Also in Kamdesh according to Robertson where "Krumai or Shumai" (1896:381, 395) are two different forms of the same name and designate the same goddess. Morgenstierne records from different sources and places confirmation that the goddess is recognized by the names Shumai, Kshumay or Krumay (1953: 164). Ksumay is the Kalash substitute for the fertility aspect of Desani who has other functions under her modified names of Dezalik and Jiṣṭak as already pointed out. However, according to Morgenstierne, "She (Desani) is identified with Jiṣṭak, the Kalash 'Vesta'," (ibid.).

Besides her calendrical worship, the goddess is supplicated on critical occasions also. One of these relates to

the safety and protection of the women's men: husbands, brothers, and sons. This happens when the men are away and raiding the enemies. At that time, the women abandon their work and gather in the dancing arena of their village. Here they dance and sing the praises and hymns in worship of the war god, Gis, and the goddess of protection, Desani. From the former they request success and booty, especially goats, and from the latter they ask to be the guardian of their men. This wish of protection is expressed in one of the hymns addressed to Desani by the women. The hymn is, "Send my man home safe and unwounded," (Robertson 1896:410, 621-25).

As long as the men are on their raiding mission or in the battle-field with the enemies, the women do not sleep at night or do any other work during the day, but dance and supplicate the deities all the time, day and night. This is probably magically directed at their men to keep them active, awake, and consequently alive. Here as elsewhere, the role of Desani is very significant. It shows that the goddess, as an ideal representation of motherhood, is the symbol of care, protection, and peace; but Gis, the ideal image of militant youth, on the contrary, is the symbol of trouble, ferocity, and warfare. The two deities of opposite gender have opposite but complementary roles in such particular contexts (for the particular personality of Gis, the war god, see Robertson 1896:400-1; Palwal 1969a: 69-70).

Among the Kalash the goddess is associated with the main section of the living room of the family. Whenever the family wishes to sacrifice a goat it is immolated on the Unjiştawa, the place tabued for women to enter. Sacrifices are made to the goddess for reasons of health and strained relations among the family or clan members. The sacrificial animal when killed on the Unjiştawa should always be a male goat, otherwise the family female members cannot partake in the feast. The reason is apparently that eating the meat of a female animal is strictly tabued to the female members of the Kafir community, but the meat of a male goat is consumed by all. It is also confirmed that a ram can also be sacrificed to the goddess. The meat is partaken by everyone in the family. If a woman is married in one of the neighboring valleys, her share of the meat is sent to her even if that is a day's distance.

#### The Material Aspect of the Goddess

The temple for the goddess of fertility and tutelage is situated above the village and above the domain of the women in Kafiristan. The reason for this is that Desani or her counterpart is attended only by males. Her temple is called Ba-Desani-tan. In the Kati part of Bashgal she shares one temple with other goddesses and gods, but in the Kam part of Bashgal she enjoys an independent temple. The temple in the Kati part is a square room with a small window on each of its four sides. Through each of the four

windows the face of one of the four idols can be viewed. It is located on the hill side of the Bagramatal village, called Bagram-pit. Robertson has given the following description of the place:

Bagram  
MA?  
MAH?

To the north of the east part of the village of Bragamatal there is the shrine on the hill-side which is hung about with juniper-cedar all along the front. It have five windows, from four of which idols look out into the world. To begin from the right there are Dizane, Shumai or Krumai, Saranji, and Sataram. (1896:395)

Saranji  
in Stutley

Excepting Sataram, the rest are all goddesses who are believed to be the sisters of Desani, and each of them is associated with one or another aspect of life. As the sacrifices are carried out at the compound of the temple, it is possible that the holes or small windows are made with the belief that the goddesses can look and watch the practices of the worshipers, or that the adherents can view her face when having communion with the goddess.

gaze?  
gazers

The Prasungalis or Veron have constructed a small independent temple for Desani in Kamdesh which has three small windows at the front, but they themselves have not devoted any particular shrine to the deity. Even though Robertson says that, "In Presungal the idol-houses are much more carved and ornamented than in the Bashgal Valley," (1896:396), he has not mentioned any temple for Desani in the entire territory of the White Kafirs. This does not mean that the goddess is not worshipped in the area about which Robertson writes, "Dizane is a popular goddess, and is worshipped wherever I have been in Kafiristan,"



(ibid:410). According to Edelberg, among the White Kafirs of Prasungal the seat for Desani is at the homestead of the clan chief (1968:9, 11).

The social function of the goddess is performed by the village tutelary deity. This is Krumay or Ksumay among the Black Kafirs and the Prasungalis, and Jistak among the Kalash, as already indicated. This tutelary goddess presides over the village congregational temple, the Groma. > Grom-ama Robertson has described the Groma for the Black Kafirs and also for the Prasungalis (1896:494, 616). Male and female members of the village all gather in the Groma for the performance of their communal rituals. Here they feast and dance without any consideration of age and sex differences. Siiger writes, "The Jistak han seems to be the only shrine to which women have admission," (1956:17).

In relation to certain ceremonies, especially those of the New Year, soot drawings (cf. ibid.:24) are produced on the walls, door, and lower parts of the posts. The drawings are predominantly of wild goats. The male goat is provided with long zigzag horns and long straight penis. The markor latter is probably related to fecundity as are the whole scene and rite mentioned before. The long horned goat is possibly also symbolizing the god Sataram who came down from the Tirich Mir mountain in the form of a he-goat. His horns were so long that they reached the sky (cf. Morgenstierne 1953:164). Sataram is also associated with the three goddesses at the Bagramatal temple mentioned above.

In Brumburet, and I think also in Rumbur, a carved ram-head in the round is fixed on each side of the door to the temple, but in Birir these are horse-heads instead. The doors as well as the interior wooden posts of the house are beautifully decorated with various patterns of carvings. The peculiar design around the posts is apparently of eyes. Some say that these are eyes of the goddess with which she watches the four directions. It is also said that these are the eyes of a giant. On top of the posts are two huge wooden horse-heads which support the roof of the temple (similarly in Bashgal). But the posts in the ceremonial houses of the Prasungalis are carved with grotesque figures of gods and goddesses (Robertson 1896:494).

About the Bashgali images Robertson says that idols are similar to the effigies (ibid.:646) which are life size and carved in the round. In Prasungal the idol of Desani is smaller in size and also carved in the round on the back of a goat whose horns she holds in her hands. Edelberg quotes his informant, about the identification of an idol discovered in the village, saying:

It is an old legend that the name of the statue was Disni. It is shaped like a woman. Her vulva is hidden behind the head of the horned goat. The two horns are grasped by the hands of Disni. (1968:6).

The faces of two other idols of Desani are carved in between the V-shaped horns of the goat they sit astride. This association of the goddess with the goat is obvious from the preceding description that she is the matron

goddess of fertility, reproduction, and protection of animals and particularly of goats, the concern of males.

Information about the goddess's idol of the social and protective role is lacking. On the one hand, this category of idols along with most other idols have disappeared among the Kalash under the influence of Islam. On the other hand, Robertson, the only source on major Kafiristan, has not described features of the idol. In fact, he had mistaken it for a male deity. He writes, "In one corner they (the village communal temples) generally have a small shrine containing a quaintly carved idol of some god," (1896:496). Fortunately enough, he has properly observed the idol on another occasion which he relates as follows:

The goddess Krumai I thought was a god for several months, but after seeing her effigy (idol) in one of the dancing-houses in Presungul, no doubt could remain concerning her sex. (ibid.:411).

The metamorphosis of Krumay is a goat whose form she takes occasionally (see Robertson 1896:384). Among the Kalash of Brumburet and Rumbur Valleys Jiṣṭak the counterpart of Krumay is represented by two horse-heads in association with two ram-heads. All the four are apparently the collective symbol of one Jiṣṭak. The two horse-heads, standing for the males, are horizontally fixed in a small board below which are the two ram-heads, representing the Kafir females. This set of four heads is placed on the wall facing the door of the temple or fixed to a carved plank set as a post adjacent to the wall. Among the Kalash of Birir

the goddess is symbolized by only two horse-heads. The two horse-heads are placed on the wall of Unj<sup>Onjesta</sup>stawa in their private houses. As the Jiṣṭak-han is a clan temple in the Brumburet Valley, and as there are two of them in each village, so each of them has one set of the horse- and ram-heads. But in the Rumbur Valley the Jiṣṭak-han is a village temple which serves both clans and thus has two sets of the symbolic heads side by side.

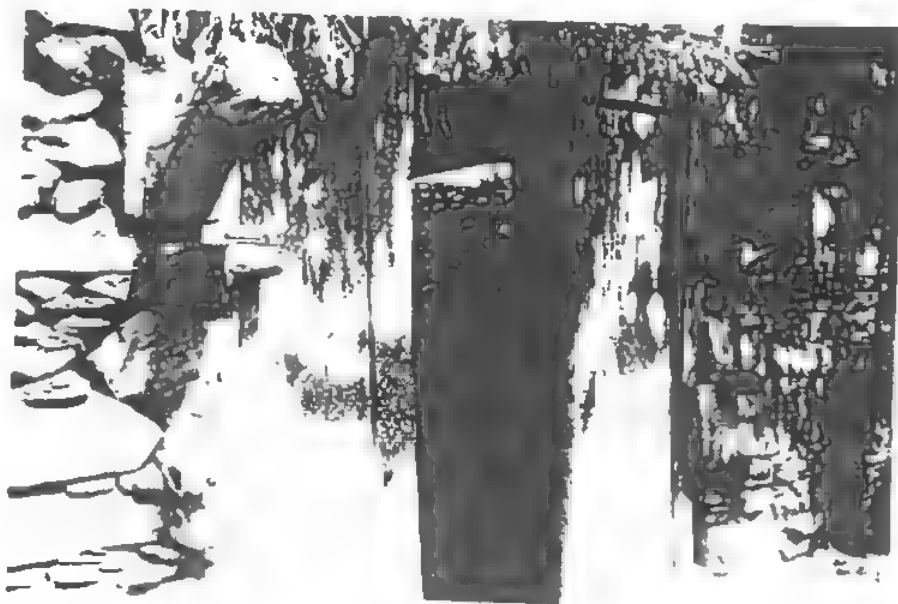
From the Aṣkun and Waigalis I know only that the goddess is associated with the storeroom of dairy and field produce. The symbolic horned head of a wild goat is carved on the door to the room. The carving has two stylistic patterns. One is the skull of the goat with U-shaped horns, and another is the skull with interlacing horns. The latter is also common among the Verons and the Black Kafirs, but generally made on house posts and verandahs. The former pattern is also associated with the frontal opening or collar of the Pashay women. The horns of the goat reach one and another side of the woman's neck, but the skull or face of the goat is stylistically represented by a loop of the horns meeting with each other below the middle of her breasts. This is all embroidered and hand-stitched.

To recapitulate, Desani, the mother goddess has two important merits: one is the creation or reproduction, and another is preservation or tutelage. Both of these virtuous powers operate in the domain of the animals, the concern of men, and in the domain of agriculture, the

concern of women; are finally in the domain of human beings as well. The tutelage aspect of the goddess has been described to an extent, but no consideration has been given yet to her reproductive aspect. This will be the subject of the next two chapters.



3. The door to the Jiṣṭak-han with a ram-head on each side.



4. The symbol of Jiṣṭak comprised of two horse-heads



## CHAPTER IV

## THE KAFIR SECLUSION HOUSE

The goddess who is involved in the female affairs of the Seclusion House has several names. The Kati name for the goddess is Nirmali (the feminine gender of Nirmala, an epithet of Imra), which means creator, according to Morgenstierne (personal communication). Nirmali is also believed to be the daughter of Imra, the supreme god. But Dezalik, the Kalash counterpart of Nirmali, is considered by the believers to be the sister of Dezaw, also the god of creation (Morgenstierne 1953:165). The names of Dezalik and Desani also mean the divine creator. It is mainly in this respect that the females look to her for guidance.

The goddess presides over a temple which forms the Seclusion House for the menstrual and parturient women. An idol of the goddess placed in the temple serves as the recipient of worship and offerings. The women attend the goddess at different times but especially at the time of menses and childbirth. During these times females are considered impure and are thus expelled from the village to the Seclusion House. They stay there until they become clean.

The Location and Distribution  
of the Seclusion House

The Seclusion House is generally a one room building which stands all by itself apart from the normal dwellings of the village or villages. Its location is lower in relation to the corresponding villages. The distance between the Seclusion House and the related villages varies from about thirty meters to more than three kilometers. The distance is really not of much importance, but there should be a barrier between the Seclusion House and the world of the living. Robertson gives the following information about the matter:

There is a building peculiar to all Kafir villages. This is the "pshar" or Mirmali house, the lying-in hospital. It is always placed on the outskirts of a village. In the Presungul, for instance, at one place it is on the opposite side of the river to the village. (1896:496).

As the Seclusion House is impure because of the impurity of its inmates, it is located apart from the sacred world, the domain of the males; and as it is the concern of women so it is situated in the domain of the females, below the village level at the bed of the valley. But the Kafirs themselves, however, do [not] rationalize it that way. They understand things their own way. In 1970, while I was taking measurements, Snoy recorded the following myth of origin for the Seclusion House in the Rumbur Valley:

When the Kalash inhabited the Chitral Valley and the Rajawāy was the ruling clan of the Kafirs, the Muslims

menaced their peace, existence, and life. While their army was at the battle-field, the shaman, Pṣe or Biṭān, consulted the goddesses of tutelage and child care. He revealed that the deities were angry and wanted their shrines removed from that area. The goddesses had also provided the shaman with two arrows, one black and the other red. According to their directions the shaman climbed to the top of the indicated mountain and from there he shot the two arrows. They fell down in the country of the Balālik (mythological beings who had populated the valley before the arrival of the Kalash). Where the black arrow had hit, there they established the shrine for Saḥigor (Desani's equivalent), and where the red arrow had hit, there they built the temple for Dezalik, the Seclusion House. It is because of this that the Seclusion House is built on that particular place at the bed of the valley.

The size and number of the Seclusion Houses are associated with the population density of the related area or village. Generally each large village has one Seclusion House to itself, but small villages located near each other share one. For the main part of Kafiristan, Robertson has the following observation: "In one respect all Kafir villages agree with one another, and that is in having the women's hospital, or Nirmali-house, placed at some distance from the other habitations," (1896:479). This statement implies that each village has one Seclusion House, but it

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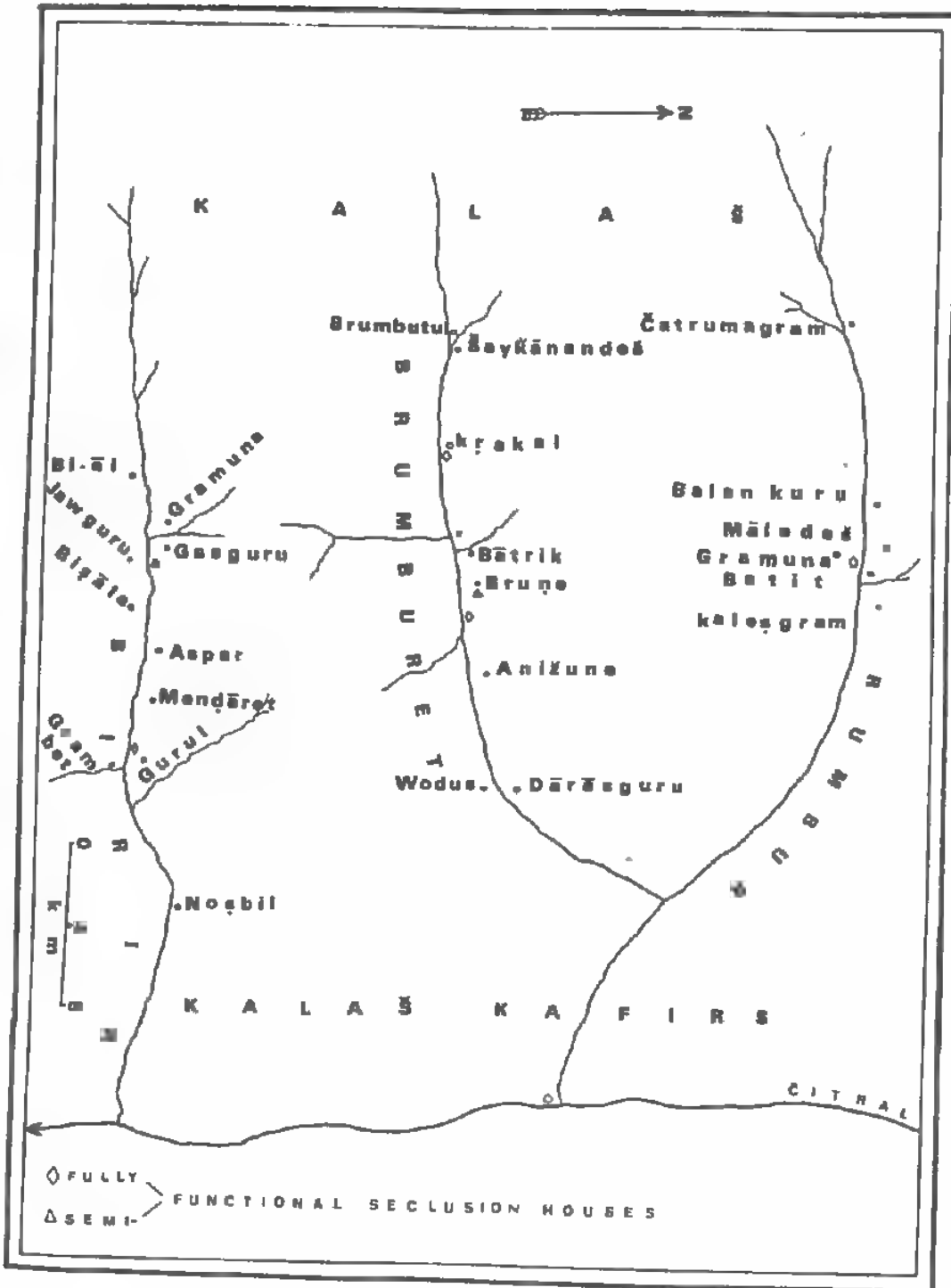
is not the case among the Kalash. In the Kalash area generally one Seclusion House is used by the women of several villages. In this respect Graziosi writes, "The limited number of bashali is related to the present scarcity of the Kalash population and to the restricted limits of the inhabited area, which allow one bashali to be used by different villages, " (1961:149-50).

Some of the Seclusion Houses are abandoned because of the Kafirs conversion to Islam. "To my knowledge", writes Graziosi, "only five bashali remain in the three Kalash valleys," (ibid.). According to my observations of 1970, there are six Seclusion Houses in the three valleys of the Kalash. Four of the six are fully functioning and the remaining two are semi-functioning. Three other Seclusion Houses have been abandoned and have collapsed.

The four fully functioning Seclusion Houses have the following distribution. One is the Krakal Seclusion House in the upper Brumburet Valley; the second one is the Anizuna-Bruna Seclusion House in the lower Brumburet Valley; the third is the Gurul Seclusion House in the lower Birir Valley; and the last one is the Rumbur Valley Seclusion House. Excepting the first, each is shared by the Kafir residents of several villages.

#### The Structure of the Seclusion House

The Seclusion House is generally a single room building which stands away from any other building. The room has one



entrance and no other small or large connection to the outside world. It has no window for ventilation or for daylight and sunshine. It has no smokehole to let the smoke go out, in spite of the fire which is lighted either for warmth or for light. "It has no windows, and is a squalid-looking place, blackened by smoke and disfigured by the abominable sheepskins," (Robertson 1896:497).

The walls of the Seclusion House are constructed mainly of stones and mud. In contrast to the well constructed village house with many wooden beams incorporated in the walls, the Seclusion House has only one or two beams of wood placed horizontally in the wall some distance up from the ground. "In the Bashgul Valley it (the Seclusion House) is usually a very badly built, low, single, square apartment, into the construction of which very little wood enters," (ibid.). The reasons for the poor construction of the Seclusion House are several. One reason is that the village houses are associated with the prestige of the owner or dwellers, but the Seclusion House is a communal dwelling and does not reflect on the prestige of a single individual. Another reason is the relatively high cost of its maintenance, and a final reason is the House's impurity which prohibits people in pure states from contributing their labor to its upkeep.

The door of the Seclusion House is located near one corner of the wall. In the opposite corner of the same wall is the place for the idol of Deزالik. The following



pattern of relationship between the two can be seen:

Table II

<u>Seclusion House</u>	<u>Location</u>				<u>Orientation</u>	
	Door Right	Idol Left	Door Left	Idol Right	Up- Stream	Down- Stream
Gurul	x	y				x
Kuru			x	x		x
Anizuna-Brana			x	x		x
Brana	x	x			x	
Krakal	x	y				
Rumbur	x			x		

The position shown by the symbol (y) is conjectural.

One significant difference the door has from those of the village houses is that the door of the Seclusion House slides to the side with no exception, but the houses' opens inward or outward. The correlation between the door and the idol in relation to the same wall is the result of the goddess's secrecy which is tabued for males viewing her idol. In this way it can be concealed properly and will not be seen from the outside, unless one puts his head in and inspects the interior of the Seclusion House.

#### The Interior of the Seclusion House

The measurements of the Brana Seclusion House, which I made, are: 4.50m long by 4.0m wide by 1.80m high. The Anizuna-Brana Seclusion House measured by the Italian

mission is 4.70m by 4.40m, with a height of 1.95 meters (Graziosi 1961:151).

Entering the Bruna Seclusion House, the long left side wall behind the hearth has two niches. The one at the center of the wall is larger and has a square shape. A number of clay pots are placed there. Some are cooking pots and the rest are water containers. In the next smaller, rectangular niche are two pots, one pottery and the other a basket. The Rumbur Seclusion House also has two niches at the same wall which adjoins the platform with the idol, but to the front of the hearth and to the right of the room. The use of these will be pointed out later. For the Kuru Seclusion House, I have not recorded any formation of this kind. In the case of the Anizuna-Bruna Seclusion House, Graziosi writes:

In the wall behind the statue, at the height of its head, is a rectangular niche and, on the same wall at opposite end of the room, a similar recess in which leafy branches were driven, here and there, in the interstices between the stones, in different places of the wall (1961:151).

Such branches of the holy oak were also inserted in the wall with the niches of the Bruna and Rumbur Seclusion Houses. The small branches were stuck in the wall at the height of a person's reach. I have no such data for the Kuru Seclusion House.

The important structure within the Seclusion House is the platform. This is a stage raised about 30 to 50 centimeters from the floor of the room. It is positioned between the wall with the door and the wall with the niches and

branches. In shape it looks like one quarter of a circle in the case of the Bruna and Kuru Seclusion Houses, but for the Anizuna-Bruna and Rumbur Seclusion Houses the platforms are of rectangular shape. The platform of the Anizuna-Bruna Seclusion House is square in shape, while that of the Rumbur Seclusion House is oblong.

One function of the platform in the Seclusion House is that of an altar, which Graziosi has pointed out:

In the right hand corner we find a sort of parallelepiped 1.30 metre by 1.35 and about 40 centimetres high, built with unplastered stones and covered with abundant ashes. . . . It appears certain that the small stone building. . . is to be considered a kind of altar, for the real, functional fireplace is located, as in all houses, in the middle of the room (1961:150; 1963:469).

I have not recorded any ashes for the other altars. Although fire was not made on those altars, but offerings other than burnt ones were certainly made. In this respect a flat stone functions as an altar at the Rumbur Seclusion House. The flat stone is placed in the corner of the wall with the niche and forms an external rectangular platform of about 32cm by 23cm, and with a height of about 50cm from the ground. The thickness of the stone is about 5 centimeters. This flat stone extends inside the small niche and forms its bottom or floor. Food and fruit pieces are placed in the form of offerings on the surface of the stone, especially inside the niche.

The second function of the platform is utilitarian. It serves as a sort of shelf for the utensils of the Seclusion House when they are not used. There were two pottery

water containers and two basket plates on the platform of the Bruna Seclusion House. On the platform of the Bruna-Anižuna Seclusion House was one basket made of willows according to Graziosi (ibid.). At the Kuru Seclusion House was an oval wooden vessel used for making dough. It was placed on the edge of the platform in inverted position. Beside this were two basket plates, but I have not recorded the existence of clay pots in this Seclusion House.

The Rumbur Seclusion House has a platform of a different nature. One section is comprised of large flat stones placed on top of each other in the manner of a wall. It is about 30 centimeters high and extends from the side of the door to the adjacent post of the house. A large tin, half full of flour and a little cheese placed in bread and then wrapped in a cloth are put in a basket on top of it. An aluminum cooking pot full of water is set next to the other vessel to form a row on the stone platform. The second section of the platform is a long wooden plank. This is about 50 centimeters high from the floor. The plank is placed on two pegs stuck at the wall on top of its horizontal beam. The plank extends from the flat stone at the corner to the limits of the post along the wall and parallel to the formation of the large stones. In between the two is a shallow empty space. On top of the wooden shelf is one coiled basket which was originally used for measuring cereal and flour in the village.

The third and possibly the major function of the platform is that it forms the seat for the idol of the goddess who presides over the Seclusion House. The idols of the Anizuna-Bruna, Kuru, and the Rumbur Seclusion Houses are erected on the floor of the platform in the corner. The idol at the Bruna Seclusion House is seated astride a peg stuck horizontally in the corner of the walls, and its feet are fixed at the floor of the platform.

#### The Ritual State of the Seclusion House

The Seclusion House is impure because of the impurity of its inmates. This impurity has isolated the house from the rest of the dwellings and primarily from the people. Males in particular are not allowed to enter the house or even trespass its immediate space. Siiger writes, "The birth-house and its surrounding field are very impure places," (1956:28). If any male crosses the tabued space around the house, he is also considered impure. This man, as an impure woman, cannot approach other men or enter the village before he has purified himself. The purification requires the sacrifice of one goat to Mahandew in the Brumburet Valley. If one enters the Seclusion House, the consequences are more grave and the violation would shake the whole society. If the man does not purify immediately, he must be sent out of the entire valley. In this case the rite of purification requires the sacrifice of seven goats to the god and the goddess. If the purification requirements are not met immediately, a strong and long lasting rain storm would descend

on the area and spoil the crops. Flood would lower down from the mountains and would wash away the fields. The man himself would either turn blind or become sick and die.

This strict prohibition has kept the Kafir males ignorant about most of the rituals and the inner world of the Seclusion House. The females are forbidden to tell the males anything about their private life and communion with the goddess. When I inquired about the inner objects of the Seclusion House from my three young male informants, they confessed their full ignorance. However, they proposed that I go and find it out for myself. I asked whether they would also enter the house with me. They agreed to accompany me to the neighborhood of the house but would not enter it. The impression I received was that they were only interested in my buying their goats and killing them for the atonement and purification.

On four occasions I was warned with loud and shrill shouts that I should not go near the building. Once when I asked the reason, an old man pointed first to the sky and then held the fingers of his one hand toward the earth and moved them back and forth. In this manner he symbolized rainfall as the consequence of the breach, a calamity from which he would have suffered. On another occasion when I wanted to take photographs of the house, a young lady came running and shouting: "Prāgata, Prāgata, It is impure, It is impure." I ignored her for I knew that I was not going to violate the distance. She finally reached and

stopped me, and then explained by placing the forefinger of one hand over the other hand, and moved the finger in the manner of sawing. She symbolized my economic loss that I would at least have to kill a goat.

It appears to me that the tabu functions to secure safety and privacy for the women. (Its other functions will be pointed out in their proper contexts). The Kafir women stay away from their men and harm the whole community during the days and nights of their impurity.

Kafir women are extremely modest about the exposure of any part of their body. During the day they rarely wade the local streams. To do so would mean they would expose their lower legs. They wear a long garment which reaches their ankles. When females collect fruit in a tree, they are careful to sit on the tree branches in such a way as to prevent exposure of their legs to the passing man. While the women are extremely careful about their dress in their normal affairs, when they enter the Seclusion House, on certain occasions, they undress completely. This opportunity of privacy for them is provided by the tabu.

The distance of the Seclusion House from the village is probably associated with the status of the village men. If the residents of the village are holy and ranked men, then the distance to the Seclusion House might be greater and vice versa. Here the distance guarantees the purity, the status of purity, and ritual well being of the holy men; and the tabu, on the other hand as stated above, guarantees the



safety and privacy of the women. Robertson writes:

From the position of many of these buildings the inference is irresistible that the villagers are much more anxious to keep the female inmates far removed from the ordinary dwelling-houses than they are afraid of having them captured by an enemy, (1896:479).

In part, because of the association of the mother goddess with water, the Seclusion House is built near to streams. Also, the stream makes the best barrier between the village and the Seclusion House, especially when the distance between the two is not great. In addition, a nearby source of water is needed for purification. Siiger writes, "Bashali, the birth-house, reserved for parturient and menstrual women, can be found in most villages close to the river," (1956:18). Rivers and streams are low places and thus are more likely to be associated with impurity.

#### The Use of the Seclusion House by Menstruating Women

Menstruating women are considered impure and thus harmful to the socioeconomic well being of the society. When a woman realizes the symptoms of her periodical menses, she should immediately abandon her housework, field work, family and village association and retire to the Seclusion House. There she stays from three to six days and leaves the following day after purification. The difference in the number of days spent in the Seclusion House is not due to the nature of menses for individual women, but to the difference of law and custom in different villages and valleys.

During the period of menstruation a Kafir woman is not allowed under any circumstances to return to her house, walk into the village, enter the fields, approach the water mill, or touch a ritually pure person, especially a male. There is an implicitly prescribed distance which she should always observe in relation to other people and objects. Apparently the length of the observed distance is positively correlated to the status and size of the tabued object. For instance, she may move closer to non-menstruating females than to males, especially if the latter are holy or important persons. In the same vein, she may come closer to a water mill than to a village or graveyard.

The menstruating women are untouchables. They are social outcasts for that period of menses. Graziosi writes,

Kalash women are obliged to leave the village during menstrual periods. They are in a most impure state, liable to contaminate all those who come into contact with them, (1961:150).

Any touch of such a woman by any means results in contamination. It is strictly tabued to hand over anything directly to a menstruating woman or take it from her. Such a transaction is indirectly carried out: One places the object on the ground and the woman picks it up. An interesting instance occurred between a woman and boy dealer. Each placed money on the ground for the other to pick up and count. Not being satisfied, the woman placed the coins one by one on the ground and gave her account of the amount. This happened several times between the two, yet both were careful to maintain their distance.

152-6

A man came and yelled at his wife who was inside the Seclusion House. She came out, crossed the river water by jumping over it from rock to rock and reached her husband. They took positions of about one to two meters apart from one another. They talked but did not reach any agreement on their mutual problem. She finally walked away, but the man rushed in front of her and tried to stop her. As he was not allowed to hold, push or pull her, she continued toward him. The man, probably instinctively, grabbed a stick and started brandishing it before her to keep her away. The woman continued walking toward him and forcing the man to retreat. Neither he nor his weapon was tabu-proof and the result of his endeavors was a failure.

Another example occurred on the fourth night of "the fruit festival" at the Birir Valley. The menstruating women, because of their unique status, were deprived of taking part in the singing and dancing. They walked together along the bed of the river until they arrived at the dancing arena of the village, Aspar. There they took place lower to the main group and were also separated from the group by a small stone wall. The menstruating women made fire for themselves and started dancing around it. I went to take their photograph, when the camera flashed, they became frightened. Most exclaimed aloud but one became so irritated that she immediately picked up a burning stick from the fire and ran towards me, but stopped and restrained herself when she came to the proper distance.

The consequence of touching is that the second person also becomes impure. He is segregated until he has washed his clothes and taken a purifying bath. If any harm or mishap happens to one of them, the violator is responsible and has to sacrifice at least a goat for expiation.

Menstruating women are harmful to the quality and quantity of field produce, dairy products and everything else being of public interest and economic value. It is for this reason that they are expelled to the Seclusion House. They are exempted from all work and especially agricultural work. ] <sup>not</sup> ~~true~~ They are not even permitted to enter a field. In contrast to this Graziosi writes, "about midday.....all its inmates were at work in the fields. We pushed the door of the small building and it gave at once, so we entered....." (1961:149). The menstruating women usually do not stay in the Seclusion House during the day unless the weather is bad. If there are several of them, they sit in front or around the house and do personal things such as spinning, weaving a belt, sewing clothes, doing beadwork, or just chatting. But often and especially when they are few in number they will walk either to the neighborhood of their respective villages or to a specific place where they associate with other women but being observant of their status and the proper distance.

Further Graziosi put specific emphasis on the matter in question that "the confinement of the bashali inmates does not exempt them from working in the fields or from

attending, at least nowadays, collective dances. However, they must not approach other women who are not in their condition," (ibid:150). The inmates of the Seclusion House are not allowed to participate in the ceremonial dances. In the case of a secular dance for tourists they are always available but surprisingly reluctant.

In the Krakal village the women returned from their fields after sunset. Among them were some three or four Menstruating women. The latter turned to the Seclusion House and the rest went to their respective homes in the village. One of the latter brought fire wood for the former who made fire with it. If the impure women really work at the fields then it is a later change in the Brumburet Valley. In the Birir Valley every evidence is vigorously against such an act.

Whenever the Kalash women become impure, "They must therefore spend the night and cook their own food in the bashali...., food is brought to them and left near the bashali, and they cook it inside their temporary abode," (ibid.). This is more true in the case of parturient women, but under certain conditions it is also the case of menstruating women. In harsh winter weather, or being far from her village, or having no family member to serve her, then the menstruating women will make her own food in the Seclusion House. She bakes bread and eats it with some cheese or purified butter if available. Otherwise, her family provides her with ready made food.

The Kafirs eat two meals a day. At about 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning and then around 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening. The menstruating woman is also fed at about the same time. If the woman concerned is a young lady then she will walk from the Seclusion House at the proper time of eating and sit a certain distance away at the foot of the village. The server, either her mother or older sister, or another, will bring down the food in a bowl and place it before her. But if the menstruating woman is of older age than the server, daughter, daughter-in-law, or younger sister, the server will carry the food to the neighborhood of the Seclusion House and place it there on the ground. The woman will come out and squat by the bowl. She is not allowed to take the pot inside the house. If she does, then the pot is no longer usable either at her home or elsewhere. It becomes impure and can be used only at the Seclusion House by its inmates. Strangely enough, this rule only applies to basketry, pottery, and wooden utensils, but not to metal and china ware which have lately been introduced to the area. I do not remember seeing plastic pots being used by the people.

Many questions can be asked about the cultural basis of menstruation and the related tabus. One may simply say that menstruation is an oddity which ever inspires the natives' curiosity. According to my data of 1968, the Kafirs believe that the cause of the menstrual bleeding for females is a demon called Camen. They say that once

a month the demon performs sexual intercourse with the females which causes them to bleed. It is for this reason that the women are contaminated by that evil spirit and thus expelled from the village to the Seclusion House, to return only after the bloody period has lapsed. Following her last day of the prescribed period in the Seclusion House, she takes a cleansing bath in the river at the dawn of the day and then washes her clothes she was wearing during this time.

In Bashgal, the Kafir women spread their washed clothes over a pole stuck on the roof of the Seclusion House for drying (Robertson 1896:497) and purifying them. But among the Kalash these are spread over large rocks at the river bed. While her garment is drying, she washes her hair and weaves it into numerous braids (during the time she is wearing another garment provided by her family). By noon she returns as a pure, clean, and new lady to the social life of her family and the village.



## CHAPTER V

### THE MOTHER GODDESS AND HUMAN PROCREATION:

#### Kafir Religious Concepts of Conception, Birth and Early Childhood

##### Origin of Women

In the pastoral culture of the Hindu-Kush Aryanian Kafirs, the supreme god, Imra, created three women out of his churned butter. These three women went to Bashgal, Ramgal, and Waigal. Each of them populated her particular valley. Then Imra added some water to the churn and produced some more butter from which he made the fourth woman. She went to Prasungal to populate that valley. Because of water added to the churn the people of Prasungal are of lower status (Robertson 1896:385).

According to my data the four women did not go on to each valley, but they stayed in Kantiwa where each originated her own sib. With the increase in population the descendents of each mother migrated together to Ramgal, Bashgal, and several other valleys. The members of each matri-sib claim to be the descendents of one of these mothers. Each sib receives the name of its own mother as Mişalāni Motr, Pṛasuk Motr, Što Motr, and Trimṣi Motr. The spring festival of Maṛwaṇa is held in honor of these four mothers. Each matri-sib (it is only mythological) of Ramgal villages, in

isolation from the other three, sacrifices a ram to the original sib mother and feast upon it. The sacrifice is called Motr Muşala which means "Mother's Ram." Two of the original mothers are considered to be the mothers of the free caste (the upper and the middle-class people), and the other two are the mothers of the slave caste (the house slaves and craftsmen).

The two free caste mothers are the goddess of fertility, Desani, and the goddess of menses and childbirth, Deزالik (Nirmali). Both of them are believed to be the daughters of Imra, the supreme being. In the following pages I will describe their role in conception and parturition.

#### The Ancestors and Conception

The information provided to Snoy and the author in 1970 by the Kalash indicates that their beliefs are more amalgamated with the folk ideas of their neighboring Muslim peoples. They believe that some people have Sāya, "shadow" (a term mainly used in Persian, Hindi, and Urdu, but it is tzawe in Kati language) and others do not. If a man has ferocity, his shadow is heavy and influential. When he dies, his Sāya or "shadow" leaves. His Sāya is then inherited by his son whenever the latter is initiated, or as the informant put it: "When his son arrives at manhood." If his son is already a man he will directly receive his father's "shadow." If his son is not qualified or lacks the capacity for the acquisition of his father's "shadow" but his daughter does, then the latter would inherit her father's "shadow" and the

son would not.

The Sāya or "shadow" has a strong role in the personality and behavior of its owner. If a woman is attacked, for instance, by a man with intention of raping her, but she resists successfully, then she has a Sāya. If the man approaches her and she gives in before he threatens her, then this woman has no "shadow." Here the term Sāya or "shadow" signifies personality, independence, confidence, determination, and self reliance. This is the borrowed aspect of the concept which is syncretized with the natives' own concept. The latter is described below, according to the informant:

If a person dies, his or her "shadow" is taken by a spirit or an angel, who carries it up to the Tirić Mir mountain. There the "shadow" awaits its rebirth. When the time for its reincarnation arrives a spirit will carry this "shadow" down and insert it into the woman at the time of her sexual intercourse. If the spirit has no "shadow" then the child will not have it either.

The preceding information is a sort of direct but adulterated evidence of ancestral reincarnation provided by a native shaman. However, in the latter section the "shadow" does not signify personality but soul instead. Dupree writes about the Aškun people of Wama that, "The soul of a man became a shadow as seen in dreams," (1971:14).

The soul or the ghost of the Kafir dead associates with the corpse for a period of one year. When an effigy is ceremonially erected on the anniversary of his death, the soul is then believed to have been transferred from the

corpse to the effigy. Even some of the bones of the dead are collected and put in a sack to be hung on the back of his effigy with which probably the soul is carried from the corpse to the image. The effigy is carved for the commemoration of the dead and as a receptacle for the dead person's soul. The soul presides over the effigy as long as it is commemorated, feasted, praised, and treated as a potential member of the family and society. In this respect, Dupree gives the following information:

The "good" Kafir eventually ended up in paradise, but often, too pleased with his life on earth, his spirit refused to leave immediately. Many hung around for years and even generations residing in a wooden effigy. Once admitted to Yurdesh (paradise or hell), the spirit could not return to the outer world of the living. As long as the spirit remained among the living (as indicated in dreams or identified by the shaman), the living must coddle the not-so-dead kinsman or ancestor. (1971:14-15).

In order to insure the stay and association of the ancestral soul, the Kafirs would sculpture another style of effigy as the receptacle for the souls of their dead. It is smaller than their life-size effigies but requires more expensive feasts than the normal effigies. These are called Kundurik and consist of a small effigy astride a small horse on top of a post. The Kundurik posts are erected near and below the village, on cross roads, and to the side or at the center of their fields. All of this is the domain of the females. The Kundurik are scattered over a wide area whereas the life-size effigies are erected all together in one place.

### Nirmali and Conception

Before the season comes for goats to bear kids, and before the time arrives for tilling the land, planting seed, and irrigating the fields, the Kafir women have a calendrical festival on behalf of the dead. This festival is called Marwapa by the Kati people of Ramgal, Māṛvalā by the Kati of Bashgal, and Maranma (according to Robertson) by the Kam people of lower Bashgal. The Marwapa festival has been referred to above, and the other two will be described below, mainly in reference to the information recorded by Robertson.

In 1891 the festival took place on the 8th of March (Robertson 1896:588). On the evening preceding the festival, the women bake seven kilograms of wheat bread which is then greased with purified butter. Kātz (a millet like cereal) is cooked as rice. These are taken by the women of each family early in the morning to the place where the ancestral effigies are erected. There they cut the bread into small pieces and place it together with Kātz before the effigies and spill wine on top of the food. Then the women smear the faces of the ancestral effigies with the ghee. At the end of their rituals, feasting, and wine drinking, the women destroy the offerings to the dead with a gush of water from a goatskin and wash the effigy off. Just after this is done, the women repair to Šar-amu, literally, "the conception house," but I have generally referred to it as the Seclusion House, and Robertson has usually called it "Nirmali-house." There the women again perform the ceremony

Kal.  
Mandak  
before Chaoma  
Nir-  
vana

'Zero Seed'  
ama-'house'?

of offerings but this time to the goddess. The women again feast and drink wine. They amuse themselves with joking and loud laughter. After the women have left the Seclusion House, they meet the men who await them on their way home. The two groups of the opposite sexes affectionately intermingle with each other. Robertson has noted that:

The men and women chaffed one another indelicately on the road, the former offering the latter neck ornaments or other small articles to be danced for, (ibid.:587-8).

Upon their arrival at the village, the women erect two stones (probably one representing the male and the other the female dead for whom effigies are not erected) before their house doors. In front of the stones they again place portions of the sacrificial food in the name of all those dead members of the family whom they can remember. This food is again destroyed or washed down by a spurt of water. They then, together with the men of their families, feast over the remaining food and wine in a world of jubilation. "I was assured," writes Robertson:

that joy and contentment reign in every household, the atmosphere of which no doubt reeked with the appalling remarks which appear to be inseparable from Kafir gaily and festivity, (ibid.:588).

There is no direct information available on the matter that the aim of the Mārvalā festival is ancestral reincarnation, or at least the fertilization of the participating women, but only the name of the festival means "the raising of the dead." In addition to this, the whole procedure of the festival provides quite a logical evidence for arriving

at such a conclusion. It is argumentatively recapitulated below.

First, after the women have associated themselves with the ancestors and contemplated them, they approach the goddess of childbirth (or, rather, child conception) at the Seclusion House. Apparently there is no relationship between the two places and their objects of rituals other than the goddess's role in the rebirth of ancestral souls.

Second, it is the only occasion, to my knowledge, that women under normal conditions (versus the familiar parturition and menses) can enter the Seclusion House and then come out with no feelings of being polluted. Not bothering to purify themselves by taking a bath in the river or washing their clothes (which get impure on other occasions), they indulge themselves with the men in pulling, pushing, dancing, or bouncing with them.

Third, the same women returning from the Seclusion House, with no consideration of pollution or purification whatsoever, enter the village and their houses. There they perform another rite of offerings to the deceased relatives. Then they eat with men and children in an atmosphere of rejoicing.

Finally, why should the dead relatives be commemorated with amusement, joking, loud laughter, dancing affectionately, and indulging with men in such indelicate play? Other peoples venerate or commemorate their dead with mourning, lamentation, grievances, and solemnity, but it is not so



with the Kafirs at all. Why, then, should their dead ancestors be commemorated and venerated in such a way? That is to please and encourage them to take part in the conception process.

### Desani and Conception

The core elements of the festival described above are the goddess Nirmali, ancestral souls, and the women; but in the following festival the goddess Desapi, sons and the men are the central figures. Their correlation may help us in understanding the functions of the festivals and of their factors. However, before describing the men's supplication of the goddess of fertility for bestowing sons upon them, it might be more appropriate to indicate her involvement in this process from the viewpoint of the natives. This matter is rationalized, as I see it, in the following Prasungali myth recorded by Buddruss.

Desani had a son whose name is unknown. <sup>(Bogusht)</sup> Together with the son of Dewog, he fenced the valley and planted vines, apples, olives, and nut trees. They also constructed new irrigation channels to their vineyards and orchards. Dewaka?

The other gods became contemptuous and stood against their attempts at changing the country. These gods decided <sup>Battle of the gods</sup> to expel them from their territory. When action was taken against the two, the son of Dewog hid away behind a rock, but the son of Desani was tracked down the valley. Meanwhile, Desani was coming up the valley and the other gods yelled at her, "this one, this one!." She promptly pulled out her

dagger and attacked the fleeing person at the dark of twilight. Realizing that she had murdered her own son, she became enraged with the deceitful gods.

The gods pleaded that her son was bringing disorder to the world by changing it. Therefore they persecuted him. "What has happened now cannot be changed. 'you are also our mother,' or we are also your sons, 'and do not rage with us any longer,.'" For her appeasement and the relief of her anger the gods decided that every year eighteen youths shall carry out contests and shall dance in honor of Desani. In the dancing arena they shall dance around the harp-player and shall say loudly, "It is my woe, it's my woe!." When all this was decided, Desani withdrew her anger (quoted in Snoy 1962:141).

*mother of the gods'*  
*appeased DIZNI*  
*mourns the 'son' of DIZNI (=Sajigor)*

The myth points out several matters of interest: First, the conflict between the reformatory youngsters and the conservative oldsters which ends with the failure of the former. Second, the myth shows that gardening, or at least its initial preparation is the job of men, but cultivation is exclusively carried out by women. The myth has no direct indication to the latter, but the coming up of Desani at the twilight (of the evening?) indicates her return from field work down the valley. Third, the ma'or oint or climax of the myth is the mother-son relationship particularly of life and death. The goddess murdered her son by not recognizing him, and the other gods pledge to respect her as their mother. It is probably the mythic rationalization of this

*pain -> Compassion*

tragic loss of her son which makes Desani the center of  
 New Year's rituals that men perform in order that their  
wives have sons. Fourth, the ritual dancing of the eighteen 18  
 youths and their contest is prescribed to be held annually  
 in honor of Desani. This is, probably, on the one hand,  
 in accordance with the belief of the Kafirs, to satisfy  
 Desani's longing for her son whom she so tragically lost;  
 and on the other hand, it probably prescribes the rite of  
 puberty initiation which is actually associated with the  
goddess. Finally, the ceremony of dances and contests of  
 the youths probably signifies Desani's motherhood. It is  
 this viewpoint which places her in the position of mother  
 goddess. What other may be the implications, her attendance  
 at the time of boys' puberty initiation, cultivation, the  
 birth of goats, and the bestowment of children; or in other  
 words, the fertility, virility, productivity, and protection  
 are requested from the goddess, Desani.

Onjesta  
 Youths  
 Sub. for  
 her son

'become her  
 sons'  
 'PURUSH'

The youths' recognition of Desani as their mother is  
 well evident at the rituals of the Gice festival. Gice, the  
 Kafirs' New Year festival which fell on the 17th of January  
 in 1891 was entirely in honor of Desani, according to  
 Robertson (1896:583). During the festival the free men con-  
 fine themselves to the two upper strata of their village.  
 The lowest stratum of the village, where the slave crafts-  
 men have their houses, is strictly tabued to the free and  
 especially the upper-class males. If anyone goes to the  
 lowest section of the valley or of the village, he is not

allowed to return to his home during the festival. After the festival has ended, he sacrifices a goat to Desani for penance and purification and then returns to the upper village and joins his family. <sup>because 'twice-born' like Brahmins?</sup>

On the eve of the festival the men light long torches and walk in groups from house to house the whole night. Before dawn the men go up to the temple for Desani. All stand around the stone enclosure with their torches burning. The shaman is within the enclosure and possessed by the goddess. The men try to enter the compound of the temple, but the shaman, fallen in trance, foams at his mouth, speaks with tongues, and throws out anyone who attempts to enter the enclosure. He demands all the men to stay out of the enclosure and hold their torches (sāṇṭi) up for the goddess to see her son well in the light. Before the day break, the men break into the enclosure. By entering the compound of the temple, the men blow out their torches in accordance with the tradition of rituals. With this the shaman becomes enraged with them, because the mother goddess can no longer (see) her son. Those men who enter the enclosure first and first blow out their torches are spit upon by the shaman who is much angered by the breaking through. The shaman then collects a few torches from some of the men who stand at his reach. This act symbolizes the belief that those men from whom the torches are taken will have sons born to them during the year. <sup>symbolic of?</sup> <sup>Son = fire?</sup> <sup>2 meanings</sup>

With the break of the day, each of those men whose wife had a son born to them during the past year brings a goat to the temple and sacrifices it in the form of thanks-giving to the goddess for granting him a son.

### The Rituals at Birth

It has been mentioned that childbirth is associated with Nirmali or Deزالik whose yoni idol is placed in the Seclusion House. Though on the one hand children are esteemed highly by their parents, on the other hand their birth is socially secluded from the village. Apparently, this dismissal of the parturient from the village to the Seclusion House is the consequence of the polluting nature of the blood of birth. On the other hand, conception and parturition are both the concern of the goddess under whose auspices they take place.

When the birth of the child is imminent she goes to the Nirmali house, where her child is born. She remains there twenty days if her baby is a girl, or twenty-one days if it is a boy. Then after a ceremonial ablution, she goes home, when she is allowed a further rest of twelve days before she resumes her ordinary work. (Robertson 1896: 596).

It is the same among the Kalash Kafirs, however, the time spent in the Seclusion House is shorter. Upon recognizing the onset of birth, the women prepare the necessary objects and inform their relatives and other concerned persons. Whenever the labor pains begin, the woman should retire to the Seclusion House immediately. If there are already other menstrual inmates in the house they will give

her a hand, but if none is available the expectant mother is always accompanied by at least one of her available relatives. Neither any of these women nor any of the inmates, unless by accident, can satisfactorily assist the woman in labor. These women do the preliminary chores, such as making fire, warming water, preparing clothes or food, making arrangements in the room, etc. But there are one or several women in the village whose hands are considered pure and good, being experienced, and having knowledge of parturition. Such a woman or women are called upon when the occasion for childbirth is arriving.

If the laboring woman has a difficult childbirth, then several midwives would attend her at the Seclusion House. If the parturition seems dangerous to the well being of the expectant mother and her child, the appropriate rituals are extended from food offering to Deزالik to the sacrifice of a goat to Kşumay (the equivalent of Desapi in the Bashgal) in the Brumburet Valley. The offerings of normal parturition to Deزالik are of wheat bread, dairy products and fruits. On other occasions, instead of wheat bread, they make the offerings of maize bread. In Bashgal a ram is sacrificed to Imra, the supreme god, and to Nirmali, the goddess of child procreation. This can be well understood from the prayer directed to them: "O' Imra, Nirmali! each with your sufficient share of the sacrifice granted to you go in divine satisfaction. O' Nirmali, Thou arth our childrens' guardian. For her sake, and of the menstruation clothes on

the pole, Camen Kafo, a ram has been killed."

The afterbirth and the umbilical cord are deposited in a pottery container buried in the ground of the Seclusion House. A child born dead or one who dies afterwards while still in the Seclusion House are also deposited in a large clay pot, called Ktyu, buried in the area which is part of the Seclusion House. The placement of the infant in the pottery, according to the explanations of my informant in 1964, is similar to its position in the womb of its mother with the head upwards. Gharzay writes, probably about Kantiwa, that the dead infant was put in the cooking pot made out of (soap) stone (1960:34). Among the Kalash the dead infant is placed in a wooden coffin which is deposited in the lowest corner of the graveyard.

It is a great disgrace to the family when a woman dies in childbirth. A woman may accept any other dishonor or misfortune but not this one. If it happens, no man in any way can take part in her funeral ceremonies. Her father, brother, husband, and anybody else avoid her burial. They also cannot attend her or give her some help at the Seclusion House while her soul is departing her body. If any of them do so, he will not only have to kill seven goats to Mahandew but also will be a social outcast.

When the news of the parturient's death reaches the village, the women and especially those of her clan remove their finery, take off their headdresses and walk down to the Seclusion House with the bed frame of the dead woman.



They prepare a wooden coffin for the woman which is then placed in the lowest corner of the graveyard. Some of the women take with them picks and spades to dig a grave for the woman where they place her coffin. The woman is buried with no fineries, no new garments, no symbolic objects, no rituals, no praises, no drumming, no dancing, no feasts and offerings. All that exists is a world of sorrow and impurity, silence and serenity. Although she has been in the Seclusion House, her house and family members are also contaminated with her death. In addition to the religious figures, other males and females also avoid her house for a period of one year which is then purified with the sacrifice of at least one goat (cf. Frazer 1936:175-98).

When the mother and her child survive the parturition in Bashgal they stay in the Seclusion House for one Kafari month of twenty days, and in Brumburet for twelve days. Upon their return to the household the former takes twelve days' rest and the latter ten days'. During this time they do not touch the major utensils or enter the storeroom of the family.

In 1970, Snoy and the author discussed the post parturition observances with our informant. The main elements of such observances and tabus is abstention from copulation and even association with the husband for a certain time. When a parturient returns from the Seclusion House, her husband is not allowed to share the same bed with his wife for a period of two months, forty days. After this the woman is

prohibited from having sexual intercourse with her husband or anybody else for a period of two years. If she ever does so her milk would become impure and consequently sicken the child. After the lapse of two years she can resume normal cohabitation, but only after the performance of the following rite:

She is first cauterized at the center of the pubic triangle or about the width of two joint fingers from the uretra by the officiating priest. This treatment is aimed at the earlier and better resumption of proper conception. They believe that with the event of childbirth all the inner organs are misplaced. By the rite of cauterization on top of the yoni slit, the disordered organs return to their proper position and consequently conception becomes possible.

### The Naming of Children

In the preceding sections I have traced the evidence of a belief in conception and childbirth to be the reincarnation of deceased family and clan members. Additional evidence is found in their system of naming the children.

The Kafirs have three successive methods of naming their children. Robertson has recorded the most common and the preliminary method of the three which I quote below:

The naming of children is peculiar. The instant an infant is born it is given to the mother to suckle, while an old woman runs rapidly over the names of the ancestors or ancestresses, as the case may be, and stops the instant the infant begins to feed. The name on the reciter's lips when the event occurs becomes the name by which the child will thenceforth be known during its life. (Robertson 1896:596; see also Elphinstone 1819II:435 for the same rite).

This method is not always satisfactory, because of possible fault in the procedure. The suspicion and dissatisfaction arises when the infant is restless, cries continuously, and does not suckle its mother's breasts. In such a case the parents and other people would consider that the child has not received its proper name. The former name of the child is discarded and a new name is bestowed upon it in the following way:

Under the directions of religious persons the parents of the child make a strong fire in the hearth of their main living room in which branches of juniperus cedar are burnt with purified butter. When all the wood and branches are consumed by the fire, its red hot coals and ashes are moved to one side and the bottom of the hearth is cleared. On this hot ground surface of the hearth a wheat grain is placed. Simultaneous to its placement the orator or oratress in charge of the rite begins reciting ancestral names of the child. Any name which coincides with the bursting of the wheat grain is considered to be the child's real name.

Wakil Gharzay of Kantiwa, Nuristan, has described this second method in a somewhat different vein. He says that an old woman takes a few wheat grains and gives each one an ancestral name. Then she drops the grains one after another with a pause in between into the fire made for that purpose. When any of the grains produces a bursting sound the ascribed name of that grain is then bestowed upon the child (Gharzay 1960:40).

After the bestowment of the second name, if the child still shows certain abnormalities in its health or behavior, it may be renamed a third time. For the final procedure of renaming the child, the shaman is consulted and invited to carry out the rite. The shaman takes his special bow by its string in a particular manner. He puts his fists vertically together and places the string of the bow below his two thumbs. The bow hangs down while his elbows rest over his thighs. Meantime the shaman is in communion with the concerned deity, and the orator recites the ancestral names of the child. Whenever the proper ancestral name runs over the lips of the orator, the bow is shaken in the hands of the shaman. This is the terminal name of the child. Its further restlessness is no longer attributed to the misnaming of the child, but to some other physical or metaphysical factor (Palwal 1969c:28-30).

The three successive methods of naming the child plainly point out the inherent relationship or rather identity of the child with the ancestor after whom it is named. Due to any fault in the process of naming the child realizes that it has been misnamed or rather identified wrongly. It reveals this misidentification or misnaming by showing certain symptoms of abnormalities as pointed out above.

Another evidence for upholding the hypothesis of ancestral reincarnation among the Kafirs in the form of newly born children is the application of genealogical method for their identification. That is, the orator does not

recite a list of arbitrary names running into his memory. He or she goes through the strict pedigree of the child's parents.

### Early Childhood Rituals

Not only the parturition is a critical occasion for a native child but the following years are also critical. Not many native children survive these first few years. Because of this danger any physical or cultural development in the infant's life is marked with rituals and sacrifices of thanks to the guardianship of the mother goddess or any other concerned deity. The developments are head shaving, teeth growing, weaning, and so forth. Among the Kati of upper Bashgal I recorded a series of rites called Damaṇa or Damaṇ which are described below.

At the first Damaṇ, after the son is born to Utā, he gives about forty-five kilograms of wheat (it is his wife's property) to every one of the Ure in office (the electorate members of the executive council of which there are fourteen in the upper Bashgal, and their head-chief or Ur-ḡiṣṭ is Utā, the priestly king).

At the second Damaṇ, Utā sacrificed one ox to Imra. This was done in connection with the Valatza ceremony, which means the ceremony for bringing the child up from the Seclusion House to the village. The ceremony took place on the 21st day of the child's birth date.

Elphinstone writes, "At the expiration of the twenty-four

days (at the Seclusion House), both mother and child are bathed and carried back with dancing and music to the village," (1819II:435). Among the White Kafirs of Wama, before leaving the Seclusion House, <sup>1</sup>Zamay Watka (literally the impurity cave), and after the cleansing bath and clothes washing, the woman makes a purification fire in front of the Seclusion House in which she burns incense. The mother with the child in her arms turns three times around the fire and then leaves for the village. At their arrival at the village, an ox is sacrificed by her family. At her house she again makes a fire and performs a rite similar to the former. In both places, the villagers and relatives and friends from other valleys are feasted and served with wine. Music, singing, and dancing enhance the spirit of the up-coming ceremony.

At the third Dameṇ, from one to three oxen or goats (one ox is valued as equal to three large goats) are sacrificed instead. I do not know in particular to whom and with what occasion this immolation is associated. However, the most important occasion following the up-coming ceremony is the head shaving rite. This takes place after ten days of the child's and its mother's return to the village, during which time they observe certain eating and working tabus. Robertson writes, "Children at the thirty-first or thirty-second day after birth, both male and female alike, have their heads shaved, " (1896:170).

When the fourth or the final Daman is reached, Utā invites all the villagers and feasts them lavishly. In addition to the food and drink, he presents one Kingyus (a little more than three kilograms) of purified butter to each of the village warriors, every initiated male who is over twelve or generally over fourteen years of age. I am not certain whether the ritual is in connection with growing of first teeth, weaning, or with the growing of the Karanc̣, the hair-lock peculiar to the Kafirs.

With very few exceptions all Kafirs wear the "Karunch" or scalp-lock. This is formed in the following way. The whole of the head is shaved except a round patch some four inches in diameter over the occiput, where it is not cut at all. A tiny lock over each ear is often permitted to remain also. (Robertson 1896:170).

This hair-lock symbolizes a Kafir's faith, identity, and particularly his status of purity. If at any time he becomes impure or is in danger of being contaminated and polluted, his hair-lock is shaved.

Among the Kalash Kafirs the hair-lock is marked for a child when it is four years old, whether it be a boy or a girl. For the boy the whole head is shaved except the occipital section where the hair remains as before. The ceremony held in relation to a boy's hair-lock marking and also the hair-lock are both called Istungos. For the rite two goats are sacrificed, one to Mahandew and the other to the god Warin in the Birir Valley. The blood of the sacrificed goats is poured over the head of the boy whose hair-lock is marked.



The ceremony held for marking the hair-lock of a four year old girl and her hair-lock itself are called Çurimeş. Opposite to the boy's hair-lock, for the girl her back head is shaved and the frontal part of her head is left unshaved. This frontal hair-lock is then woven together into a single braid. On this occasion grapes and mulberries (fresh or dry), walnuts, and what other available fruits are distributed among the participants. Besides a goat is sacrificed to Jiştak, the matron goddess of the Kafirs' family. The blood of the goat is not poured over the head of the girl as it is done in the case of the boy.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The prominent features of the Kafir culture analyzed in this study are of dualistic nature: high and low, male and female, benevolent and malevolent, sacred and profane. The question of the origin and of the pervasive nature of these structural dualisms in the various symbolic, mythological, and ritual components of the Kafir culture arises.

Two categories of causal factors are responsible for this particular structure of the Kafir culture, one natural and the other sociocultural. The dualities of high and low, and male and female are natural upon which the cultural dualistic structures have been laid. On the other hand, the benevolent and malevolent, and sacred and profane are aspects of the processes inherent in sociocultural formative factors. The specific interdependence and historical interaction of these natural and sociocultural or passive and active factors have been elaborated into the Kafir dualistic culture system.

First, the high and low concepts are basically spatial attributes. They form the intrinsic part of the Kafir geographical environment which is comprised of high mountains and low valley beds.

Second, the Kafir community is comprised of male and female sexes as any other human society. Males have one category of attributes and females have another. Each of the categories befits a different working environment. In all human societies of various cultures, from hunting and gathering communities to the highly technological ones, the male covers a larger space in the pursuit of his occupation than does the female. On the other hand, the female is more attached to the domicile than is the male.

Third, the Kafir economy is dualistic, and is comprised of agriculture and animal husbandry. The two activities do not go together in the same environment at the same time. The former is associated with the valley beds and the latter with the mountains. The Kafir raise goats in great numbers which must be controlled, protected from beasts, and defended against the raiding enemies. Consequently, agriculture becomes a suitable pursuit for the females, and goat herding for the males.

Fourth, all male members of a Kafir village or community do not engage in their pastoral pursuit at the same time. Only a small number of them stay with the flocks in the mountain pastures, and leave when their substitutes arrive after a Kafiri month of twenty days. They have plenty of time for agricultural labor, but socially this is not permitted to be carried out. Every initiated male over fourteen years of age is the warrior of his community. He serves his society by defending either the village or the flocks,

or by invading the neighboring enemies. Working in the fields by himself or along with the females would certainly conflict with the role of warrior and defender of community interests. The controlling force behind the whole system is the prohibition maintained by "the executive council," and its supernatural complementary, the rule of tabu.

Last, whenever human control is uncertain supernatural control takes over. Rational law of prohibition is replaced by the supernatural rule of tabu. The tabu operates between the realms of sacred and profane. Everything benevolent is sacred and anything malevolent is profane. Anything tabued for females is sacred and anything tabued for males is profane. This reveals that male is potentially sacred and female is profane. The reason for this distribution of value lies in their socioeconomically determined performances in the environment. Whatever physical attributes have enabled the male to cope with the mountainous environment, warfare, and other hardships of life for economic success, those are responsible for the development of his concept of superiority over the females among the Kafirs. Other physical attributes and developments such as menstrual cycles, conception, and child care have confined the role of the female so as to make her dependent on the male. These differences in role promote the value judgments of sacred and profane in the male dominant culture of the Kafirs.

All these different factors are incorporated in a functioning whole and have enhanced the duality which centers

around the role of males and females. Space, occupation, and even the supernatural beings are divided between the two sexes. Mountain pastures, pastoral pursuit, and most of the deities are the concern of males, but on the other hand, valley beds, agricultural pursuit, spirits and ancestors are the concern of the females. From a cognitive viewpoint, the following passage from Robertson represents the common belief and world view of the Kafirs:

In the Kafir theology there appears to be both a heaven and a hell. It divides the universe into Urdesh, the world above, the abode of the gods; Michdesh, the earth; and Yurdesh, the nether world. Both the heaven and the hell for mortals, is in Yurdesh, which is reached through a great pit, at the mouth of which a custodian named Maramalik, specially created by Imra for the purpose, is always seated. He permits no one in Yurdesh to return to the upper world. (1896:380)

Urdesh or the abode of the deities is not the sky or heaven, but the upper side of the mountains. It is the area around the Kafir goat pastures which is considered to be the domain of the males. Ur-des-h means "the upper country", and Yur-des-h means "the lower country," which is the abode of the dead. Basically it is the bottom of the mountains or valley beds where the dead are deposited and their effigies erected. This is the domain of the Kafir females, where they carry out agricultural activities. In between Urdesh and Yurdesh is Mich-des-h, which means "the middle country". It is the village where both males and females live together.

The village in relation to the upper world and the lower world is a relatively ordinary or neutral world. To

take Michdesh, the village, as the point of departure: The greater the height of space above the village the more sacred it is, and on the other side, the lower this height below the village the more profane it is. Probably for this reason, in addition to the difference in religion and long standing hatred, the country of the Muslims is considered impure. The Muslims are also barred from the Kafir villages for being not pure or clean. Siiger has further generalized this viewpoint by saying: "The entire Kalash country is pure, whereas the surrounding Islamic countries are impure, and any Kalash becomes impure if he visits an Islamic area," (1956:28). The reason for this is that the Kafirs' territory is geographically higher than that of the Muslims. On the other hand, the goat-houses are considered pure if not sacred (cf. *ibid.*), for being above the village level. But the temple for the goddess of child-birth is believed to be impure or rather profane which is situated below the world of the living. This polarization is well mirrored in the culturalized physical crises of males and females. In the case of puberty initiation, boys become pure and attend Desani, to whom each sacrifices a goat. Then they go with the goats to the mountain pastures for a period of about nine months. They are not allowed to return to their villages or to any other lower part of the valley. These places are impure and tabued for them until their requirements are met and the time is lapsed. On the contrary, when girls arrive at their age of puberty, they

attend Deزالik (Nirmali) and are considered impure. For this reason they leave the village for the lower section of the valley and stay at the Seclusion House for some six days.

As a parturient woman spends a month of twenty days at the Seclusion House, a man who is about to receive the rank of Mimac also spends twenty days at a place up on the mountain side, called Mi-sa. During this time neither the woman can go up to the village, nor can the man come down to the village; no villagers, even those of their sex, can associate with them unless having the same status (for Mimac see Palwal 1969b:21). The point in question is that when a person becomes sacred or profane he goes into isolation and takes distance from his society. The tendency for the male sex is that it becomes <sup>special</sup> sacred and the female sex becomes <sup>unqan</sup> profane; spatially the former takes a higher position and the latter lower in relation to each other and society.

'special' to the god/gods. then?

Similarly, the supernatural beings of the Kafirs have also upper and lower positions in their spatial layout. Deities associated with men dwell on the top of the mountain. The association with (certain gods) makes a person sacred and with others, profane. The wide difference in their layout or position is either due to their status or their function. However, like the social classes in the Kafir villages, the supernatural beings have a hierarchy of positions which spatially ranges from the lowest parts of the valleys to the



top of the mountains. To have a configurational view of the Kafirs' supernatural beings, the dead and their effigies, the religious functionaries, and other sacred and profane objects and places in their spatial distribution, it can be concluded that a contour map of their environment might be a proxemic model of the Kafirs' supernaturalism.

Now, looking at this map we will see that the sacred <sup>gates</sup> objects will be classed in one domain, and the profane <sup>courses</sup> objects in another, quite apart from each other (see Durkheim 1915:37). This separation and destructive opposition of the two is intervened by a third domain of ordinariness and neutrality (cf. Levi-Strauss 1957:150-56). In this domain we find another category of objects. Though the objects of this domain, as those of the other two domains, are varying in relation to one another from the viewpoint of status, but <sup>these - some sacred</sup> still fall in the same class and category. <sup>hot - gold.</sup> Possibly the natives have other sub-classes of which I do not know. <sup>'wheat', 'millet' are sacred ...</sup> However, from this classification we learn that the Kafirs <sup>hot 'cold foods'?</sup> have a well-formed cognitive taxonomy of their physical and <sup>in earth/?</sup> metepysical environment.

This taxonomy is based, in degree and kind, on the <sup>ongesta</sup> duality of male and female or of sacred and profane. <sup>pragata</sup> The concepts of sacred and profane have developed in relation to one another. They have destructive opposition and should be usually kept apart. Their domains do not border each other, but there is an intermediary domain to keep the opposing domains separate. This middle domain is not

created by the two oppositions as it appears to have been. In fact, both the sacred and the profane have developed out of this middle world of ordinary nature. In other words, the middle domain of the tutelary goddess has maternal status to that of the fertility goddess above and of the fecundity goddess below.

As already implied, the aspects of the mother goddess have developed under similar conditions. The attitude towards sacredness and profanity of the two sexes has not only created the split in social space or domains, but also in the concerned objects of worship. The split in the supernatural beings, especially the mother goddess, is not a duplication but an elaboration of the certain aspects of the deities or in the case of the mother goddess, an elaboration of the interest of the two sexes. The separate aspects of the same goddess have developed into distinct personalities. Their names have been also modified through time, or in relation to their role and function, or because of the variation in the local language. These three different aspects are in the form of three different deities which are described in relation to their roles in the body of the thesis. They are tabulated below with their functions in relation to one another and other concerned elements. I hope to have shown the dualistic conformity of socioeconomic life with the supernaturalism of the Kafirs of which the mother goddess is a prominent example.

TABLE 3

<u>Functional Aspects</u>	<u>Black Kafirs</u>	<u>White Veron. Kafirsh</u>	<u>Sex of Worship</u>	<u>Temple Location</u>	<u>Place of Worship</u>
Fertility	Pastoralism	Desani	Males	Urdes	Pastures & Temple Fields
	Agriculture	Desani	Females	None	
Tutelage	Social	Desani Ksumay	Males and Females	Michdesh	Village
Fecundity		Desani	Males	Urdes	Temple
	Human	Nirmali	Females	Yurdes	Temple

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